

June 1, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell,

We, a diverse network of transparency and advocacy organizations across the ideological spectrum, urge you to take steps to ensure that all U.S. aid to Ukraine is subject to independent oversight. Specifically, we call on you to confirm Rob Storch to be the inspector general at the Department of Defense, and to apply pressure to the administration to nominate an inspector general for the Department of State.

While there is a need to provide support for Ukraine, the sheer magnitude and speed at which the federal government is sending aid calls for robust oversight in terms of both spending and monitoring its use. On May 19th, the Senate passed almost \$40 billion in emergency supplemental funds for Ukraine, which brings the total amount to over \$50 billion since the beginning of the Russian invasion in February of this year.¹ To put this in perspective, in under four months, U.S. commitments to Ukraine have surpassed the annual military assistance the U.S. sends to long-standing partners such as Israel and Egypt.² As such, lawmakers should be working to ensure that there are guardrails on these enormous spending packages. Such oversight efforts should neither slow nor hinder Congress' efforts to support Ukraine; rather, it would ensure that the billions of dollars that the U.S. is sending arrives in the hands of its intended recipients—and does not inadvertently line the pockets of war profiteers who are seeking to use this war to enrich themselves.

In order to monitor and track this U.S. funding, President Biden and the Senate should work together to install a permanent inspector general at the Department of State and the Department of Defense. As the two federal agencies primarily tasked with overseeing U.S. assistance to Ukraine, their affiliated offices of inspectors general should be fully staffed and equipped to detect and prevent instances of fraud, waste, and abuse; however, both are missing permanent watchdogs.³ The Pentagon in particular has been missing a permanent inspector general for over

¹ Jennifer Scholtes and Connor O'Brien, "Senate clears \$40B Ukraine aid package," *Politico*, May 19, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/19/senate-40-billion-ukraine-aid-bill-00033719>.

² Arthur Galocha and Ruby Mellen, "Ukraine is now the top recipient of U.S. military aid. Here's how it surpassed even Israel and Egypt," *The Washington Post*, May 17, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2022/biden-ukraine-military-aid-us/>.

³ Christina L. Arabia, Andrew S. Bowen, and Cory Welt, Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine*, Updated April 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12040>; Aidan Quigley and Paul M. Krawzak, "Dispute over oversight is at heart of Senator's Ukraine delay," *Rollcall*, May 18, 2022, <https://rollcall.com/2022/05/18/dispute-over-oversight-is-at-heart-of-senates-ukraine-aid-delay/>; Danielle Brian, "There's no oversight of billions in Ukraine aid – we need fiscal watchdogs," *The Hill*, May 13, 2022,

six years, and while Rob Storch, the nominee to fill the position, was voted out of the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2022, his confirmation has been stalled for months.⁴ Meanwhile, President Biden has yet to announce a nominee to be inspector general at the Department of State, despite the vacancy being open for longer than the duration of his time in office.⁵ Prioritizing Storch's confirmation and pressing the administration to finally announce a nominee to be the top watchdog for the Department of State would go far in bringing critical transparency and accountability to U.S. aid transfers to Ukraine, and ultimately make that aid more effective in the long term.

Senator Rand Paul's proposal to add oversight of the Ukraine assistance to the Special Inspector of Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is a reasonable, though less desirable, alternative path forward.⁶ Placing oversight of Ukraine aid under SIGAR would allow for an existing office with a deep bench in terms of experience in investigations and financial transparency work to begin conducting oversight of U.S. funding streams to Ukraine. However, Senator Paul's ultimately unsuccessful efforts to hold up passage of the Ukraine funding package in order to force consideration of this amendment only serve to underscore that while legislation to strengthen independent oversight mechanisms is critically needed, it must not delay or otherwise hold hostage much-needed aid.⁷

Senator John Kennedy's proposal to establish an entirely new Special Inspector General for Ukrainian Military, Economic, and Humanitarian Aid may actively undermine efforts to monitor U.S. aid to Ukraine, at least in the near term.⁸ As written, it would fail to provide an additional layer of transparency and oversight to U.S. aid to Ukraine between enactment of the act and establishment of the office, meaning that in the interim, large-scale and continuous U.S. assistance may remain unchecked. If lawmakers are committed to considering Senator Kennedy's proposal, they must first address deficiencies regarding how to ensure that the office receives the proper resources it needs to fulfill its mission. This should include drawing from the lessons learned from the creation of the Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery, which didn't originally include emergency hiring authorities—that POGO later advocated for—because lawmakers didn't conceive of the full scope of challenges posed by establishing an entirely new oversight office amid the creation of emergency spending programs.⁹

<https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/3487430-theres-no-oversight-of-billions-in-ukraine-aid-we-need-an-inspector-general/>.

⁴ Robert Phillip Storch – Department of Defense, Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/117th-congress/1368>.

⁵ Inspector General Vacancies, <https://www.oversight.gov/ig-vacancies>.

⁶ Aidan Quigley and Paul M. Krawzak, "Dispute over oversight is at heart of Senator's Ukraine delay," *Rollcall*, May 18, 2022, <https://rollcall.com/2022/05/18/dispute-over-oversight-is-at-heart-of-senates-ukraine-aid-delay/>

⁷ Aidan Quigley and Paul M. Krawzak, "Dispute over oversight is at heart of Senator's Ukraine delay," *Rollcall*, May 18, 2022, <https://rollcall.com/2022/05/18/dispute-over-oversight-is-at-heart-of-senates-ukraine-aid-delay/>

⁸ Aidan Quigley and Paul M. Krawzak, "Dispute over oversight is at heart of Senator's Ukraine delay," *Rollcall*, May 18, 2022, <https://rollcall.com/2022/05/18/dispute-over-oversight-is-at-heart-of-senates-ukraine-aid-delay/>

⁹ *Oversight of Covid-19 Financial Relief Packages: Hearing before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee*, Cong. 116, July 28, 2020, (testimony of Danielle Brian, Executive Director of POGO, <http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/download/07/28/2020/testimony-brian-2020-07-29>).

Therefore, we encourage you—first and foremost—to confirm Rob Storch to be the inspector general at the Department of Defense, and to call on the administration to nominate an inspector general for the Department of State.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Council for a Livable World
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Accountability Project
Progressive Democrats of America
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
R Street Institute
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions